AREA "A," Subparagraph 1k, Sociological Background

RELIGION

The population of Hungary is predominantly (65 per cent) Catholic. Calvinists are second in importance (20 per cent), while Lutherans and Jews represent five per cent each, and the number of Unitarians and Greek Catholics is very small. None of these denominations is linked today with specific ethnic groups (there is, however, a preponderance of Calvinism in the Kúnság); their geographical distribution is relatively even, with the percentage of Protestants rising slightly toward the east. Regardless of church adherence, the present-day Christian religious life of the Magyar peasants still shows the relics of their ancient faith.

The primitive religion of the Magyars was shamanism associated with a kind of animal-totemism. Sorcery played an important part in their spiritual life and soothsayers held key positions in the retinues of the tribal chiefs. We have little material evidence of this primitive religion; no drums or other accessories of shamanistic rites used by the Magyars' ancestors have ever been found. However, the essentials of their funeral rites, as revealed by excavations, accord exactly with the shamanistic ceremonies of Inner-Asiatic tribes.

795 The appearence of worship among the Catholic majority follows the internationally established rites of the Church of Rome which will here be discussed only inasmuch as they present certain features peculiar to Hungary. (Religious customs connected with holidays and superstitions are discussed in Subparagraph 1h.)[1]

[346] Most of the villages, however small, have their own churches. The Protestant churches are ostensibly simple, while the Catholic ones are as richly decorated as the parish's financial situation permits. Divine services are being regularly attended, the men and women, with heads uncovered, are seated in separate rows, wearing their best clothes. The front [554] seats which used to be reserved for the local gentry are now occupied by the most respected well-to-do farmers' families. For the Catholics, special Sunday afternoon services are being held but, as a rule, these are attended by women only.

776 795 Among the Catholic peasants the veneration of saints and especially the cult of the Virgin Mary is widely practiced. The House of the Árpáds gave a number of Magyar saints to the Catholic Church; many of them still live in legends among the Magyar peasants. Szent (SAINT) László is the best remembered among them, embodying the ideal of Christian knighthood: gallantry in the fight against the pagans, charity, and defense of widows, orphans

1/[see cat. 116, pp. 72-92 -- Analyst]

1: Indiana U. E-4 1955 EC1 Hungary EC1
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and the poor. Saint Steven's son Szent Imre, who died in his youth, represents chastity; Szent Erzsébet and Margit represent charity and pious contemplation. Holy Mary is addressed as Magyarok Nagyasszonya 'Patrona Hungariae'; as is the case in many other countries, people consider her to be a very special patroness of the country and turn toward her when the country is in trouble. Referred to also as Szüzanya 'Virgin Mother,' St. Mary's cult is by far the most popular, especially among women. The cult of Saint Joseph, patron of the Christian family, is also widespread. 776 795

From among the foreign saints, Saint Anthony of Padova, Saint Theresia of Lisieux, and Saint George are the most popular.

The Magyars have numerous pilgrimage places which they visit occasionally or when they face special problems. The shrines they visit have images of saints, but mostly of the Holy Mary to which healing or other special powers are attributed. The most frequented ones are Máriabesnyó in the vicinity of Pest, a place of pilgrimage since 1759, the caves of Mária-remete in the same region, formerly inhabited by hermits, and Máriapócs near the city of Nyiregyháza which is the famous pilgrimage place of the Greek Catholics, numerous in that part of the country. The virtue of these places is attested by the Catholic Church and the faithful are encouraged to pay a visit there. Besides these and a few lesser accepted places, there are 778 795

778 795 at least a dozen other local churches, e.g. Szeged-Alsóváros and Kalocsa, which attract the flock not only of the village but also of the neighboring regions on account of certain powers that are attributed to their saints.

[788] The pious peasants often plant crosses at the crossroads and at the boundaries of their villages; when they pass by, they sign themselves with the cross. Larger towns feature calvaries (kálvária), open air representations of Christ's sufferings which are visited by the faithful especially during Lent.

576 771 The sayings common among the peasantry also reveal their deep religiousness. Greetings, for example, of the jó napot 'good day' type are always returned in the country with adjon Isten 'may God grant you.' The greeting Dicsértessék a Jézus Krisztus - Mindörökké, amen is very common among the Catholic peasants; it is of purely ecclesiastical origin, a direct translation of Laudetur I. Ch. - In aeternum, amen. Moreover, all of the more elaborate types of greetings refer to God and are actually derived from blessings.

796 795 Processions are common among the Catholics. On major holidays, especially on Easter and Corpus Christi Day, the clergy and the faithful march through the main streets of the town, carrying square gonfalons with pictures of saints, candles and the Holy Sacrament, singing hymns and praying. Before harvest time, a procession goes out to the fields where the blessing of the crops takes place with the assistance of the whole village. Processions

nowadays, are often prohibited by the local Communist authorities or simply limited to the square around the church or even to the interior of the church. 795 [796]

The Protestants, besides worshipping on Sunday in their church, often gather in their homes in the evenings and read the Bible, sing hymns, and tell pious stories. [771] Hungarian folklore is rich in legends and tales of which a common subject are the wanderings of Christ among the peoples in the company of Saint Peter. [538]

The celebration of the Catholic parish feast is an occasion for joyous festivities in which the non-Catholic inhabitants also take part. [796]

Intermarriages between Catholics and Protestants are frequent in spite of the restrictions imposed by the Catholic Church which require a reverzális, [525] a document in which the non-Catholic party agrees that children issuing from the marriage shall be brought up in the Catholic faith.

Although there are no permanent sects in Hungary that preach healing by faith, men and women who claim to have charismatic virtue and to heal through laying on of hands and prayer arise occasionally among the peasants and acquire a local and short-lived renown. They are called javasember or javasasszony. 756

With the 1945 land reform and later decrees, the Catholic Church has lost its large estates and even the land owned by local parishes were partly 654 793

659 793 distributed. The State, in return, pays a small amount (kongrua) toward the support of the clergy, the payment of which is conditioned by the individual priest's signing the oath of loyalty to the regime. The bulk of the income of the parish priest (plébános) must therefore come from the parish, who willingly support their priest in spite of their own financial problems. This economic dependency of the plébános upon the members of his church has not caused the loss of his disputed but so far unshaken prestige among his flock or even among the entire population of the village.

[795] As for the organisation of the churches, the Catholic hierarchy is headed by the Primat of Esztergom who presides over the Bench of Bishops comprising three archbishops and fourteen bishops. The highest authorities of the Protestant churches are the synods held periodically, their highest administrative body is the konvent. There are four general districts, subdivided into counties which conform to the territorial units of the state administration.

771 665 The still powerful impact of the Church upon public life was demonstrated in recent years by the returns of the 1947 elections in Hungary. The completely inexperienced and unorganised Demokrata Néppárt, which had

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many kinds of subversive activity from mass uprisings to guerrilla warfare. The most reliable among them are the richer peasants, if for no other reason than the discrimination which the present government uses against them.

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The Christian churches by their very nature are opposed to the political practice of Bolshevism and are thus potentially subversive. From the purely ideological point of view, the Catholic Church is the most effectively anti-Communist by virtue of its own monolithic internal organization which virtually excludes any other spiritual allegiance than to the Church itself. Moreover, the Catholic Church is the only really nationwide organization in Hungary which can hardly be penetrated by Communist informers and agents because there is no elective principle among the clergy. The organization of the Church overflows the boundaries of social strata and could be powerful in coordinating subversive activities among groups otherwise socially isolated. Any serious attempt to overthrow the present government cannot dispense with Church backing.

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Allowing such subversive potentiality to the churches does not necessarily mean, however, that all the members of the clergy can be counted upon. Especially the more liberal Protestants have displayed

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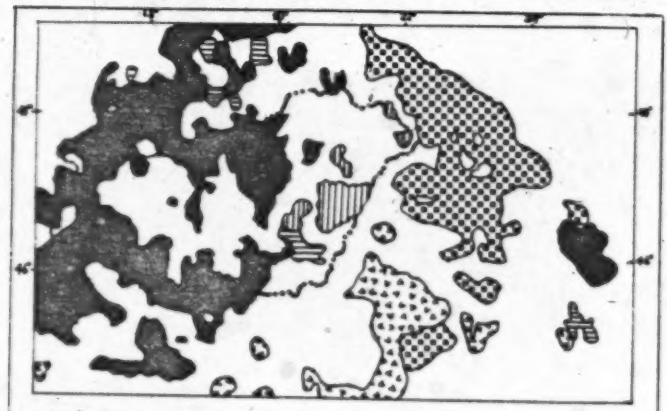

CATHOLIC (Over 75%)
CATHOLICS OF EASTERN RITE (Over 75%)
ORTHODOX (Over 75%)
LUTHERAN (Over 75%)
REFORMED (CALVINIST) (Over 75%)
Mixed ( No group over 75%)
Hungarian Boundary

RELIGIONS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1



latter, however, still possess much wider powers than an English County Council. 631

Budapest and a few other large towns rank as Counties. Smaller towns have their own councils, but are subordinated to the County in which they are situated. Each County is also subdivided into rural districts, and these again into communes, which form the lowest grade of administration. Each commune, or village, has its own elected Council, but also a clerk or notary, who is an official of the County.

The police consists of two bodies: the gendarmerie for the rural districts, who are a military body, carrying firearms and wearing splendid feathered hats; and the ordinary police in the towns. The Nazi-controlled Government of 1944 began to 'militarize' the police also. 625

**THE CHURCH.** The Church counts for a great deal in Hungarian life. On Sundays almost everyone living within reach of a place of worship goes to Mass or the Protestant service, as the case may be. Especially in the country districts, the religious ceremonies are the chief occasions of the year. A very characteristic sight in Catholic districts is a long procession, consisting of most of the population of an entire village, walking slowly along the road, led by their priests and carrying banners with religious symbols. This going in procession is known as 'Búcsú' (literally 'farewell'). 771

Hungary is a country of mixed religions, among which the Roman Catholic has the largest number of followers and holds, in most respects, the leading place. As has already been told, Hungary was con- 795

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verted by the Western Church nearly 1000 years ago, and ever after considered herself as standing under the special protection of Rome.

This tradition is still alive, even in politics. The Holy See concedes to the King of Hungary, who bears the title of Apostolic King, special rights which it claims for itself in other countries, and has exercised its influence in favour of Hungary on many occasions. In return, the Catholic Church enjoyed a specially privileged position in Hungary up to modern times; and, although all the chief Confessions are to-day nominally equal, the Catholic Church is recognized as the senior among them. There are three Roman Catholic Archbishops of Hungary—the Archbishops of Esztergom, Kalocsa and Eger. The first-named, who is in fact always made a Cardinal, is the head of the Roman Church, and one of the most important figures in the country, particularly when, like the present Benedictine Archbishop, Cardinal Seredi, he is a commanding personality.

The Hungarian Succession Law provides that the King of Hungary, as wearer of the Holy Crown, must always be a Catholic. The chief national festival is St Stephen's Day (20 August), and the most venerated of all the national relics is the Holy Crown. Next to it comes the Sacred Right Hand of St Stephen, which was found preserved, in a mummified condition, about a century after the Saint's death, and is carried in procession every St Stephen's Day through Budapest with a dazzling array of gold-broidered vestments, uniforms and traditional costumes.

The Church is one of the largest landowners and

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1



The Church is one of the largest landowners and one of the richest institutions generally in Hungary. Besides the Archbishops and the Bishoprics, many of the monasteries have received vast endowments from kings and other pious persons. The leading order is the Benedictine, whose chief house at Pannonhalma, in West Hungary, is an 'Arch-Abbey', not subject to the jurisdiction of any bishop. The Cistercians, Franciscans and Piarists also possess many monasteries. All education in Hungary was in the hands of the Church up to modern times, and these four Orders still conduct a large number of secondary schools. A considerable proportion of the primary schools are also 'confessional', that is, parochial schools.

There is a rather wide gap between the higher and the lower Catholic clergy. The village priests are relatively poorly paid and have to live modestly. Nevertheless, they enjoy much esteem, and rightly, for they are a devoted and well-educated body of men.

**THE PROTESTANTS.** Considering the position held by the Roman Catholic religion, it may seem strange that the confession which is commonly regarded as the most 'national', and which is nicknamed the 'Magyar faith', should be not the Catholic, but, on the contrary, the Calvinist. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries nearly the whole country was converted to Protestantism, the German colonists and a few others adopting the Lutheran confession, while most of the Magyars followed the doctrines of Calvin.

In the seventeenth century West Hungary, which was then under the direct rule of the Habs-

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1



795 burgs, was reconverted to Roman Catholicism; but Central Hungary, which was under the Turks, and Transylvania and the East, which were practically independent, resisted the 'Counter-Reformation'. Indeed, the Princes of Transylvania fought the battles of their co-religionists in West Hungary, and it was because neither party was strong enough to crush the other that toleration and equality between the main religions were established, first in Transylvania—the first country in Europe where this occurred—and later in the whole of Hungary. As the Habsburgs represented a foreign influence, Calvinism became linked with the idea of Magyar nationalism and Hungarian independence.

795 **RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE.** This distinction still exists, but politically and geographically Western and Northern Hungary are still overwhelmingly Catholic, while the plains of the Alföld are predominantly Calvinist: the chief Calvinist centre is Debreczen. In Transylvania, the Magyar population is partly Catholic, partly Calvinist, partly Unitarian.

798 Politically the Roman Catholics are still rather identified with the Habsburg cause, the Calvinists with the opposition to it. Socially, most of the great aristocratic families, except those of Transylvania, are Catholic, as are the peasants among whom they live, while the Calvinists are stronger among the 'gentry' and independent families. The old quarrels between the two Confessions have, however, died out. They live together in harmony and are on a footing of equality which is carefully preserved. The Protestants have perhaps in the

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1



last twenty-five years enjoyed a political influence out of proportion to their numbers, owing to the fact that the Regent and many of his special circle and advisers were Calvinists. Actually, in Trianon Hungary about 75 % of the population was Roman Catholic and 20 % Calvinist, and this represents roughly the proportion of the adherents of the two Confessions among the Magyars.

THE MINORITIES. A good many of the non-Magyars of Hungary are also Catholic or Calvinist; thus the Croats, most of the Slovaks and a fair proportion of the Germans are Roman Catholic.

But several of the non-Magyar peoples of Hungary belong to Churches which are distinctively theirs, or to which, at any rate, few Magyars belong. Nearly all the Ruthenes are Catholics of an Oriental Rite, or 'Uniates'. Of the Rumanians, some are Uniates, the remainder Orthodox; the Serbs are Orthodox. Many of the Germans are Lutherans. The only other important religion is the Jewish.

While the Uniate Church is a part of the Roman Catholic Church, the other Churches all enjoy almost complete autonomy, and thanks to the system of 'denominational education', which long prevailed extensively in Hungary, and still exists in large measure, the non-Magyars were able to exercise a degree of control over their own schools. This independence was, it is true, much reduced in the past fifty years, but it was certainly through their Churches that those non-Magyars who were neither Catholic nor Calvinist were able to preserve as much independence as they did. The non-

9: Eppstein S-4 (no date) 1945 EC1 Hungary EC1



Magyars who were Catholic or Protestant 'assimilated' far more to the Magyars than did the Orthodox Serbs or Rumanians. As regards religion itself, tolerance prevails; and, although the non-Magyar churches are not so rich as the Roman Catholic, they have not to complain of their status. Only the Jewish question, which has been described above, stands out differently.

14: Evans S-3 (1950) 1953 EC1 Hungary EC1

# HUNGARY'S CHURCHES TODAY

Of all the wild talk that has been bruited about to confuse the minds of the people of this country on the passage of events in the countries of Eastern Europe, none has been more wild than the picture of the coming to Hungary of an order of affairs in which the clock has been put back for the churches and instead of the freedom they previously enjoyed they are now being subjected to "religious persecution."

The truth is that, whereas there has been no age in which the flame of freedom has not burned in the breasts of the Hungarian people, there has also been, till now, no age in Hungary in which liberty has not been attacked and its defenders repressed. This is as true of ideas and defenders of religious freedom as it is true of ideas and defenders of freedom in general, and when the present situation is looked at in the light of the past the manifest advances it reflects can be clearly seen.

## Conversion to Catholicism

Christianity came to Hungary in the tenth century, but it was during the reign of the first King of Hungary, Stephen (997-1038) later known as St. Stephen, that it was firmly planted in the country, partly by the rough arm of the civil power, with the result that on the death of Stephen there was a strong reversion to paganism. The first missionaries to Hungary had come from the Orthodox East, but a number of factors, particularly perhaps Stephen's alliance, through marriage, with the German Empire, led the country into the Western, Catholic, camp.

It is not possible in a brief pamphlet such as this to review the turbulent course of Hungarian history and the many setbacks the growth of Christianity received, chief among which were the Turkish invasions.

It flourished and grew despite them all and grew in a fundamental alliance with the State, the bishops, although at first foreigners, being nominated by the crown and never being averse to calling in the aid of the civil power to suppress the heresies that seemed perpetually to arise; the Cathari* in the twelfth century and the Waldenses† after them preparing the ground for the later Reformation. It was to deal with this situation that in 1228 the bishops called for the establishment of the Inquisition in Hungary, but it cannot be said ever to have gained a firm footing.

* A heresy which flourished in Northern Italy. It held that matter was evil.

† A movement originated by Peter Waldo of Lyons. It was anti-clerical and advocated apostolical simplicity.

795 From the very beginning of Christianity in Hungary no century
796 passed without major religious disputes and without the use of strong repressive measures. If in 1315 there were a large number of Waldenses, in 1415 there was a wide spreading of Hussite‡ teaching which was soon implemented by considerable Hussite emigrations from the adjacent Bohemia, and in 1444 a solemn contract was signed between King Vladislaus and Cardinal Julian for the extermination of the Hussites who were, however, saved by the death of both at the Battle of Varna fought against the Turks.

**Reformation Struggles**

It was in the following century that the major dispute began, the dispute between the strongly entrenched and rich Catholic Church in Hungary and the disintegration in its own ranks brought about by the forces of the Reformation which came to Hungary for a long time predominantly in their Lutheran form, although at a later stage it was the Calvinist element that was to predominate. The battle that began in 1521 with the condemnation of Luther's works by the Archbishop of Grau assumed many different forms in the next three centuries, and if it seemed in 1530, when the Queen and her Chaplain went to the Diet of Augsburg, that Protestantism was going to win, yet the main feature of much of the subsequent history was the expropriation of Protestant buildings and the physical torture, imprisonment and often death, of the Protestant clergy, a persecution which often produced strong feeling in other countries, as is shown by a pamphlet, *A Brief Narrative of the State of Protestants in Hungary*, published in London in 1677. This pamphlet reports the famous occasion when Protestant Ministers were summoned by the civil authorities to Pressburg and there required to lay down their employment and leave the kingdom or else to become Catholics. Those who refused were then condemned by judges, who included bishops, to sentence of death and loss of property. In fact those who stood fast, predominantly the Calvinists, were fettered, transported to Italy and sold for the forced labour of the galleys, from which they were eventually saved by an ably conducted cutting-out expedition led by the Dutch Admiral de Ruyter.

Despite all persecution, however, Protestantism grew and flourished, the Bible was translated into Hungarian and increasing freedom was won, although full equality with the Catholics had not been achieved even by the time of the opening of the second world war. The Calvinists particularly had made an outstanding contribution to Hungarian history which is symbolised, perhaps, by the use of their college at Debrecen for the first meeting of the first Hungarian National Assembly in 1848.

‡ Hus in Bohemia owed much to Wyclif in England. The views of both were of the same type as those of Waldo.

14: Evans S-3 (1950) 1953 ECl Hungary ECl
p.11

propaganda against the Government. All Catholics who supported the nationalisation were threatened with excommunication in a pastoral letter of May 17, 1948; but by this threat the Cardinal forced a development of the situation which bore fruit at a later stage in that he compelled the latent Catholic opposition to his own policy to come into the open and conferences of Catholic teachers were called to oppose the policy of the Cardinal.

Since it was the proposal to nationalise the schools that compelled all the churches to define their attitudes, it is right at this juncture to go back and consider the third factor in the situation, the attitude of the Protestants.

### Bishop Bereczky

The man who was destined to become the leader of Hungarian Calvinism (the Reformed Church) at this period was Albert Bereczky, and it is important that his attitude should be understood. He himself states it quite clearly in his contribution to *Five Years of Hungarian Protestantism*, 1945-1950:

" A terrible anxiety was growing in me, beginning with the thirties, that we were living in an awful deception which would lead to catastrophic consequences. The outbreak of the war realised my forebodings. I was sure that Nazism, after an unforeseeable course of disasters, would lose, and, in my sleepless nights, I saw the opening of an abyss which would engulf the whole nation and the church which had become like the salt which had lost its savour. Those who did not feel this anguish—yet how little it was to feel only this—will never understand what liberation meant. To put it bluntly: for those who found no fault with the years before or even during the war, nothing else happened but defeat, disaster and judgment. There were many such people, even among believing Christians. Why, it was possible to lead, individually, a good Christian life, to maintain one's fellowship with Jesus Christ, and even more, it was possible to gather these pious individuals into pious groups and to be, at the same time, completely oblivious to the fact that lots of money could be made by owning tenement houses in the Párkány Street, in which small rooms served as ' houses ' to 14-15 members of three-four families, in an environment of such physical, mental and spiritual destitution that it would have taken the coarsest hypocrisy to demand of these people that they be ' Christians.' And there were many Párkány Streets in those days !

" There were hundreds of thousands of rural proletarians on the Great Plain whose staple food throughout the winter was but beetroot that is only fit to be fed to the cattle. Yet how many a time did the account of their poverty fall on deaf ears ? It was my great sin that, while seeing all this, I was content to dole out that charity that we were able to give and to administer drops of

214 794 Papers, of course, are not the only publishing activity. Bibles are published by the Bible Committee of the Hungarian Protestant Churches. In 1949 they disposed of 30,000 Bibles. In 1950 it was 15,000 up till the end of August, the rate of distribution slowing down as people are now awaiting a new translation on which an Old Testament Committee is working, the New Testament being nearly completed. (The current translation is of 1911.) Again 30,000 hymn books were distributed in 1949 and more than 15,000 by September, 1950. Books and pamphlets are published in considerable quantities, Turneiser's *Cry of the Soul* is one of the more recent. Separate school text books have been published for each of the eight school classes. The Church Calendar is produced in 55,000 copies; *Az Utitáes* (The Companion) is issued as a guide to daily Bible reading; Karl Barth's *Dogmatics* and *Gospel and Law* have been issued, as have works by Bereczky and Péter; there was a special pamphlet on the Holy Year and another against anti-semitism.

794 [207] The Protestant Churches also attach considerable importance to the broadcasting time which is allotted to them. The Reformed Church has a fortnightly half-hour and every eighth week it broadcasts a full mission service. Its leaders also broadcast from time to time on other programmes. Since October they have also been given a half hour in both Hungarian and English on the short-wave programmes. Other churches have equivalent facilities although in October, 1950, the Catholics were still not availing themselves of their time.

The Reformed Church also has its own charity service and maintains 12 homes for orphans, four homes for old people, one home for epileptics, a mental hospital and a nursing home. These institutions are run by the central administration of the church. There are also others run by its local bodies. A special Sunday at the end of October was devoted to collections in all churches for the maintenance of these institutions. Every district church also maintains a church institute.

795 The situation in the Lutheran Church was explained by Bishop Dezséry, the successor to Bishop Ordass. The Lutherans, he said, have about 500,000 people. They are organised in four districts, each with a bishop. There are 21 deacons and 320 congregations. The largest is Budapest with 75,000 people. It is essentially a " diaspora " church (that is to say, scattered) and in remote places simply organised into pastoral circles.

874 The Lutheran Theological College is at Sopron and has about 100 students, 15 of whom were new this year. It runs a five-year course but is considering reducing it to four years. Latin, Greek 794 and Hebrew are compulsory. Lutheran publications include the 204 weekly *Evangélikus Elet* (Lutheran Life) 12,000 copies, the monthly *Lélek Pástos* (The Pastor) for pastors, and a weekly

evangelical magazine *Elö Viz* (Living Water). They are considering the publication of a new monthly magazine for congregational work.

The great need of the moment is for cantors as most of their church cantors were school teachers who abandoned their church singing when they entered the employ of the State. This would seem to indicate that when they were in church employ they did the singing as an act of necessity rather than from free choice. As to politics, all the Lutheran pastors, said the bishop, were in favour of peace but not all work for it, although the bishops have given them a lead. "Christians and Communists," he said, "can work together. The peace movement shows it." As to influences in thinking, Barthianism was still strong although not as strong as among the Reformed. Some think his influence cannot be reconciled to the Augustinian Confession* although the bishop himself regarded this confessionalism as retrograde in the modern situation. Other European influences are Ragaz and Kutter, although their influence is waning and the present situation with its new tasks needed new thought. Naturally pastors were now reading socialist works and a number of articles and lectures and conferences show the effect this has had on their thinking. This was not, nevertheless, regarded as a primary task in the present situation, in which there were so many practical tasks to solve in which theology had a good deal to say, one such being anti-semitism, which was not yet eradicated although the policy of the State was having its effect.

Ordass had been convinced that Western bourgeois democracy was right for Christianity and had been sharply opposed to the socialist direction of the country's policy.‖ He had had a considerable influence in the Lutheran Church but by now the greater part of the pastors could see that the church was developing under the present State and that they are now getting a new relationship with the people. In this matter of Ordass, the Lutheran World Federation had, he thought, been an instrument of American policy. Ordass had eventually been deposed by the Church which had petitioned the Government for his release.

Attending Catholic services, visiting Esztergom, and meeting a number of priests associated with the Catholic Priests' Peace Committee showed a vigorous continuation of the life of the Catholic Church. The symbol of the Catholic Peace Committee, a white cross on a blue ground with a dove at the foot shows a relationship which is far from being inappropriate and which, however long it took to come is now powerfully grounded.† The effect of the Church-State agreement is also symbolised by the buildings at Esztergom where the vast and rather pretentious

* One of the basic documents of Lutheranism.

‖ Bishop Ordass' trial for currency offences is discussed on p. 17.

† By December, 1952, 3,000 of the total of 4,000 priests were members.

346 cathedral built between 1822 and 1869 in imitation of St. Peter's, Rome, dominates the City; the Franciscan buildings had been nationalised, now they are returned to the Church, while the nunnery, on the other hand, has become a State school. The seminary is busy training Catholic priests and the Palace of the Prince Primate is inhabited by nuns, two vicars and church offices although uniformed retainers and cars are still in evidence.

659 792 The dissolution of certain religious orders was agreed at the time of the Church-State discussions as was the continued existence of the Franciscans, the Benedictines, the Piarists, and the Hungarian Poor Sisters of Our Lady. Monks of dissolved orders have become secular priests while the lay brothers have mainly become school teachers. Each of the remaining orders has two houses, except the Franciscans who have three.

**Christians and Peace**

[795] 794 208 575 More than anything else, perhaps, it is the movement for peace which has paved the way for the co-operation of all the churches in Hungary, not only with the Government but with the Communists. As the movement has developed more and more Christians have come into it. This was abundantly demonstrated in May, 1950, with the beginning of the collection of signatures for the Stockholm Peace Petition. Immediately after this the Reformed Church sent a message to the World Council of Churches pleading with it to take a stand for peace and, at the same time a letter was sent to all its parishes urging the clergy to take part in the peace movement; the Unitarians called on all their ministers to work against war; Catholic priests began to make statements for the Peace Movement, whereas the bishops opposed their participation. In June came the Hungarian Peace Congress with strong Protestant participation and some Catholic. Then came the Cathlic Priests' Peace Conference, already noted, and the Church-State agreement which led the Secretary of the Catholic Priests' Peace Committee, Fr. Richard Horváth, to say:

"This agreement proves that those who initiated the Catholic Priests' Peace Movement were right. The movement has helped in bringing about the agreement and, thus, the long wished-for desire of millions is realised. With this agreement we have made a great step forward in strengthening internal peace.

"We promise to support the Bench of Bishops so that they can fulfil the agreement—which serves the best interests of our people and their spiritual welfare—with the best possible results. We express our thanks to, and our confidence in, the Government for its goodwill and understanding of the interests of the Catholic Church, and towards the workers' loyalty to faith, and respect for traditions. We again declare that we shall continue to do our duty as citizens with enthusiasm and unselfishness."

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As a result of the Regency's efforts to effect a measure of "land reform" by purchasing large estates and parceling them out to small farmers, the Catholic Church became the principal landowner in the country. It held one-eighteenth of all the arable soil, and a great variety of other tangible assets. As a rule the Church treated its tenants well—so well, indeed, that many of them viewed the possibility of "land reform" with misgiving. One could, indeed, argue that such a "reform" might well prove to be an enterprise of questionable value. Perhaps a peasant could live better by working on a large estate managed in accordance with the principles of just labor legislation than on a small plot left to his own devices. The fact remained that there was a strong demand for ownership of the soil by those who tilled it. At any rate, a thoughtful, forward-looking churchman could not view the situation with equanimity. Although the Church estates produced revenue which was needed for the upkeep of numerous religious, cultural, and charitable institutions, a strong Catholic social reform movement insisted upon a wider distribution of property. A solution was not found. Either there ought to have been "land reform" in the sense indicated, or laws should have been enacted to insure a decent livelihood to the farm worker. Nevertheless one must note that Kalot, the organization of Catholic peasant youth founded by an indefatigable Jesuit, was one of the strongest associations of the kind in Europe. It had more than 200,000 members when Hitler marched into Hungary, and its educational program was directed with intelligence and moral fervor.

Perhaps the major reason for the Church's loss of appeal to poorer citizens in many parts of Europe was not Karl Marx or Charles Darwin, not Voltaire or Hegel, though they and others undoubtedly had a good deal to do with it. Something far more tragic was the matter. The poor man drifted away because of the Church's natural but too exclusive concern

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when he went to pay his respects at the bier of one who in the eyes of the Catholic Church had sinned grievously by committing suicide, provided one of the most dramatic moments in the history of opposition to Nazism. The Hungarian Army did what it was ordered to do. It fought with valor on the Eastern front and suffered heavy losses. We should not fail to respect its bravery and its sacrifices. One of the erroneous assumptions in recent historical writing is that good soldiers should pause on the eve of battle to decide by caucus whether what they are about to do is above reproach from every moral point of view. That is surely the proper business of the government that orders them to take the field.

During the period of Nazi domination, the Catholic Church fought with energy and charity to mitigate the persecution of the Jews. Numerous tributes have been paid to it for that reason. Cardinal Serédi stated the position of the Papacy on this question with eloquent courage. He was followed in office by Joseph, Cardinal Mindszenty, destined to become one whom the world would look upon as a martyr. The Church saved thousands of Jews from deportation to concentration camps, frequently hiding them in the rooms of convents and monasteries or spiriting them across the border, so that a substantial Hungarian Jewish minority survived. The pro-Nazi Party, known as Arrow and Cross, was shunned by every faithful Christian. In like manner the Church had assisted Polish soldiers who had been forced to flee after the defeat of the armies in which they served.*

When in 1944 the defeat of Hitler was foreshadowed by

* I shall not forget the Polish officer to whom, one fall afternoon in 1945, I gave a lift. As we drove from the outskirts of Naples to Rome, past the ruins of Monte Cassino, he told about the cemetery on the battle-scarred heights above the town, in which rest 1,200 soldiers of the Polish brigade who died in the attack. He was doomed not to return to his homeland. Gratefully he recalled the hospitality which had been accorded to him in a Hungarian convent.

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795 When in 1944 the defeat of Hitler was foreshadowed by
661 the reign of terror which found in the Jew its major victim,
793 the Papal Nuncio in Budapest issued countless "letters of protection" to Jews, enabling them to live in buildings which were the property of the Vatican and therefore entitled to diplomatic immunity. Nor did the Church itself escape paying a heavy price. Although Hungarians suffered less drastically than the Poles or Czechs at the hands of the Nazis many of their priests took the bitter road to Dachau. Others, including two bishops, were incarcerated in Hungarian prisons. During the winter of 1944 the Nazis executed the senior chaplain of the Hungarian Army. When defeat came the priests of Hungary did not flee. Only 12 out of more than 1,200 abandoned their rectories. Witness the death of William Apor, Bishop of Győr. Drunken Soviet soldiers entered his residence and tried to force their way into the cellar, where a number of women were hiding. The Bishop calmly met them face to face, in an effort to pacify them. He died in a fusillade of bullets, but the women were spared.

661 Yet this heroism was destined to earn no earthly reward.
642 After 1945 there ensued instead one of the heaviest-handed enslavements of a people, and one of the direst persecutions of the Christian faith, of which history has record. Though we shall be concerned with the second, let us not forget the first. For the Communist Party the sole important question was how quickly and completely the opposition could be liquidated, regardless of the means or the cost to the population. The Hungarian people struggled to elect a non-Communist government and, despite great difficulties, succeeded. The November, 1945, election resulted in the triumph of the "conservative" opposition. Even after Communist intrigue and machinations forced out of office the government thus chosen, the Communist Party was defeated in the election of August, 1947, obtaining less than 23 per cent of the vote.

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793 Germans. Later he denounced quite as vigorously the expulsion of German-speaking minority groups from Hungary. However, as soon as the treaty went into effect, the Cardinal and the Church were left to face the enemy unaided. It had been argued that he should have anticipated the development and adopted a more conciliatory tone; but the evidence garnered in other satellite countries shows that he would merely have made his own lot easier without changing in the least the direction in which the Communist Party was implacably moving.

659 798 795 The first effect of the treaty on religious activities was the subjugation of the Calvinist and Lutheran churches. Lutheran ranks had been seriously depleted by the expulsion of German "ethnic" groups. During the autumn of 1948 Bishop Lajos Ordass, undoubtedly the ablest and most courageous Lutheran leader, was brought to trial and sentenced to two years in prison. The Calvinists, on the other hand, were led intellectually by Dr. Albert Bereczky, who seemingly assented to every demand made by the State. Soon this Hungarian Protestant church heard Bishop Imre Ravecz say that "the most important and significant ordinances of the Hungarian form of society are in complete accord with Holy Writ." These developments were interpreted in some quarters as meaning that whereas the Protestant churches enjoyed complete freedom under Communist rule, the recalcitrant Catholic Church was having a difficult time because of the bigotry and lust for power which characterized its Hierarchy.

795 578 771 As a matter of fact, the Calvinist Church in particular was feeling the knout, not merely in outward persecution but also in inner conflict. Prior to the signing of the treaty and the Communist seizure of the government the dominant group in it was the one that had opposed the Nazis. These men, notably Bereczky, were persuaded that the traditional interdependence

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of Church and State had been evil, and that only separation could advance the cause of the Gospel. The coming of the Communists was interpreted as being in part a punishment visited upon the Church for sin. Drastic reform was therefore needed, and above all missionary effort to bring the masses to a realization of the true meaning of Christian teaching. Yet at the same time the gifted and realistic Bishop László Ravasz pointed out firmly that freedom was possible to the Church only if society recognized the value of freedom and insisted that religious education was a duty no parent could shirk if he hoped to remain a Christian. An ultimatum by the government to the Church, presented during the early months of 1948, resulted in the resignation of Bishop Ravasz as President of the General Synod and as a member of the Hierarchy. The Synod protested against this high-handed action, but in the end Bereczky gained the position of greatest prominence in the Church.

Passing over, for the moment, the situation thus created, we resume the chronicle of the Cardinal. Every new day brought disappointments. The government laid its heavy hand on the schools, the press, and Catholic Action. It induced a group of Catholics, in the name of progress, to promulgate criticism of the Primate. Outwardly it was still possible to pretend that Church and State were seeking agreement. Monsignor Zsigmond Mihalovics, director of Catholic Action in Hungary and later an exile, relates in *Mindszenty, Ungarn, Europa* that he went with a companion to attend a reception in honor of the President of the Republic late in 1947, only to find that Mátyás Rákosi, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Communist Party, was anxious to chat and have his picture taken in the company of Church dignitaries. The Party was still interested in camouflage and, as usual, was proficient in the art.

Events moved swiftly towards a climax during the summer